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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11, 2008

#### In Today's Papers

##### President Gul Continues Talks in the US

All papers report President Abdullah Gul met with UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon in New York in order to lobby for a new Cyprus initiative in 2008. Gul stressed the Turkish Cypriots will continue to back efforts for a UN-sponsored settlement. Ki-Moon said he wanted to wait for the presidential elections in south Cyprus before launching new initiatives. Turkish papers believe hopes for a settlement will fade away if Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos wins another term in office. Gul and Ban also discussed the situation in the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk, with Gul urging the UN to "facilitate" efforts to grant the oil-rich city a special status.

In New York on Thursday, Gul met international investors at the St. Regis Hotel to discuss Turkey's privatization, EU accession, and social security reform. Gul stressed the reform process in Turkey would continue. He later met with Henry Kissinger for 45 minutes. The meeting was closed to press.

On Thursday evening, Gul was interviewed on CNN-International where he said Turkish military operations into northern Iraq would continue as long as the PKK used the region as a safe haven. He suggested there should be a timetable for withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and that diplomatic efforts with Iran be doubled.

##### Erdogan Unveils Government Action Plan

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan Thursday announced the AKP government's "Action Plan." Erdogan said the goal of the program was to complete the "social restoration process" in Turkey. Liberal Radikal says the new plan was not a concrete action plan but "wishful thinking." Islamist-oriented Zaman says the plan's priorities will create new jobs, promote democratization, initiate a new constitution, and support EU accession. According to the plan, state incentives for farmers will end, the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) will be completed in four or five years, and new universities will be established in nine provinces. Erdogan noted

the state will no longer extend direct subsidies; rather state support will be based on production. He also announced the headquarters of Central Bank and the state-owned Ziraatbank, Halkbank, and Vakifbank will be moved to Istanbul. Erdogan also stressed privatization sales will continue, tax legislation will be simplified, and the floating exchange rate regime will remain in place. He said at least 10 more diplomatic missions are to be opened in African countries. The PM also noted the draft constitution would be made public in a few weeks.

#### Bomb Attack in Diyarbakir Divides the PKK

Vatan, Milliyet, Sabah, Zaman, Cumhuriyet and others: Mainstream Milliyet speculates that the Diyarbakir attack divided the PKK. The executive council presidency of the PKK issued a statement saying "the issue concerning the Diyarbakir attack is complicated." Meanwhile, the military council of the PKK called the Diyarbakir unit of the organization back to northern Iraq. The bombing in Diyarbakir revealed the internal unrest in the terrorist organization. Vatan reports that the January 3 bombing led residents of the city, who have been afraid to voice reactions to PKK terror for years, to begin to criticize the PKK. Even the mainly Kurdish party DTP reacted to the bomb attack harshly.

Meanwhile, a group of 200 NGO representatives held a 'silent march' in Diyarbakir yesterday under the leadership of the local Bar Association to condemn the January 3 attack in Diyarbakir.

#### Controversial Alevi Dinner

All papers report that the controversy surrounding an Alevi Iftar dinner organized by an AKP parliamentarian is growing. None of the prominent Alevi organizations are supporting this Iftar dinner. The spokesman of the Alevi Associations Federation Metin Tarhan issued a

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written statement saying that there are 279 Alevi organizations in Turkey and that only eight of them will attend the Iftar. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that PM Erdogan and 14 of his Ministers will attend the dinner at Ankara's Bilkent Hotel tonight. During his opening remarks, the PM is expected to comment on the problems faced by Alevis. Mainstream Sabah says the dinner caused disagreements among Alevis and Alevi leaders have threatened to excommunicate those who attend the dinner. Liberal Radikal reports that the senior Alevi leaders are objecting to the dinner by saying 'the goal of the dinner is to weaken the secular, republican, non-racist and non-fundamentalist stance of Alevis.'

#### EDITORIAL OPINION: US-Turkey

"Political Solution; What Is That?"

Fehmi Koru opined in Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak (1/11):

"Ambassador Wilson's statement that 'Turkish and American leaders did not discuss a political solution to the PKK' is very important. Ambassador Wilson is aware of sensitivities in Turkey and the differences in jargons, so he decided to conclude this controversy with his comment. However, statements by other US officials confused the situation. Both Dana Perino and an unnamed White House official talked about a long-term solution which includes a political solution. The fact of the matter is that the fight against terrorism is very complicated. In addition to military measures, Turkey has to take economic, social and political steps for the sake of its security, welfare and safety. Economic and social measures always pave the way for talks about political changes. In America, such steps can be considered part of a political solution but Turkey views the term "political solution" as sharp-edged. Turkey is going through a period of learning how to solve its own problems as it gets rids of terrorism."

"Political Solution: No Room for Optimism"

Cengiz Candar wrote in business and political daily Referans (1/11): "Evidently the US is looking for a political solution to Turkey's Kurdish problem. In this context, Washington prefers to see Turkey engage in dialogue and cooperation with the Iraqi Kurdish leadership. Turkish President Gul categorically denied the stories he and Bush discussed a 'political solution' to the PKK because he was afraid it would come back to haunt him in domestic politics. In

fact, what is wrong with discussing a political solution to the Kurdish issue at the White House? Some circles, rather optimistically, are waiting to see political steps taken by President Gul and PM Erdogan, because they believe that current Turkish leadership will act realistically. I can speak for myself because I will not join the circle of optimism. I do not see any serious indication of the Turkish leadership's preparation for a comprehensive solution. The traditional approach treats this problem with economic development. Unless we treat the Kurdish problem as an identity issue and unless we take action with strategic vision as well as political decisiveness, there is no room for optimism."

TV Highlights  
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

- Erdal Polat, the suspect captured in connection with the January 3 bomb attack in Diyarbakir, was charged with PKK membership in 2002, but soon thereafter was set free due to insufficient evidence.

- Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Ali Babacan will participate in the First Alliance of Civilizations Forum in Madrid from January 13-16.

- Turkey's radio and television watchdog RTUK is expected approve the sale of ATV-Sabah media group to Calik Group. On December 5,

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ATV-Sabah was sold for USD 1.1 billion in an auction at which Calik Group was the sole bidder.

#### International News

- The PKK-linked Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK) has been designated as terrorist organization by the US.

- The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled Thursday Turkey violated the rights of nine Greek Cypriots who went missing when detained by the Turkish military during the Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus in 1974.

- President Bush said in Ramallah he believes there will be a peace treaty between Israel and Palestine by the time he leaves office.

WILSON